

rocks from the shore. More stones were then piled in a semicircle facing the lake and well above the ground for extra protection, and with the addition of cranes and a lug-pole the fireplace was completed. It was initiated then and there when the campers cooked their noon meal. After dinner they built a table and benches. Levelling off a space for a tent finished their day's work. Then, a swift gathering up of tools and a brisk paddle back to camp! Talking to the rangers after a day such as this, one realized that their deepest satisfaction lay, not in the mere building of a campsite or landing, but in the service they had rendered to the Park, and through it to their country.

Their enthusiasm was infectious. Their spirit of service began to permeate camp, and soon younger campers showed signs of wanting to do something similar. This was just what we needed, as up to this time everything had centred around the campers "getting" for themselves, rather than giving. One group decided they could best serve by improving the Park campsites on our own lake. There were nine at that time.

Ranging was not our only war work. Our crafts department made educational toys and dolls' furniture for war-time day nursery schools in Toronto, instead of something for themselves, or something to take home. They also made stuffed animals and sheepskin booties for displaced children and war orphans.

Thus a project which started out as an answer to the needs of a few older campers grew until, by the end of the summer, it included every member of the camp.

The spirit of service continued through the war years; ranging trips taking the place of canoe trips, enthusiasm never lagging. The second year we were allotted more territory to take care of, the canoe route and surrounding area from Cache Lake to Head and Boundary Lakes. Not only were docks and runways kept in repair on both these routes but Adirondack shelters were built on Boun-



dary, Head and Little Island Lakes. Campers who had a part in building them will undoubtedly point them out with pride to their children and grandchildren.

The favourite Ranger song sung to the tune *Illinois* was:

Wooded shores lure us on to explore still more  
Wonders of the great out-of-doors,  
Blazing trails all day long, amid laughter and song  
Or chopping a cedar log through, through, through;  
Strap a compass and knife and an axe to your belt;  
There's a thrill in the woods to be felt  
When you chop and you swing, you can hear your axe ring!  
Oh, the call comes to hearts that are true!

Back in the city the older tribes carried on their discussion groups during the winter and all through the war years till 1951. We met the first Saturday of each month at the home of one or other of the campers or the home of the director. No refreshments were served as a precaution against having the evening turn into a social function, and we were on our way home by 10.00 p.m.

We had various ways of handling discussions. Sometimes the topic was a natural follow-up of the previous evening, or perhaps a topic in which campers were specially interested. Perhaps it was an incident involving a question of gang loyalty or honesty. The discussion might be led and held together by one person or by a panel of counsellors and campers. Very often questions were handed in by campers for discussion. Sometimes the counsellors chose the questions, and on other occasions we brought in experts on a chosen topic — vocations, for instance. Vocations were discussed not so much from the point of view of money as on the basis of finding the work through which each could make her most valuable contribution. We came to the conclusion that only in this way



could we find real satisfaction or joy in the work we were doing.

Naturally, many of the plans for the following summer were talked over, and this planning through the winter gave us a great sense of continuity and steady growth.

The Crees saw their ideas being put into practice, their ideas about projects, programmes and ways in which they could help the younger campers. It was at one of these gatherings that thought was given to the train trip to camp, where the whole group assembled at the Toronto Union Station and were taken to camp in specially reserved coaches. Through a new arrangement, worked out from our discussion, special attention was paid to each new camper, to see that she met the campers of her own age and was not allowed to feel alone in a crowd. Since that time the train journey has no longer been a nightmare, but is a joy to counsellor and camper alike.

Another outgrowth of the winter discussion group was the decision to have a theme for the summer. This theme was at first chosen by the group, latterly several themes were chosen and submitted to all the campers so that they could make their own choice. On one of these occasions the choice was: "It's not who's right, but what's right." Our endeavour was to seek not the answer which was for the advantage of any one group or person but the answer which was right for all. On this basis we decided to discuss everything.

Then came a request from the campers. It was to have allocations to tables in the dining-room made twice a week instead of once. That was what they wanted. That was what I did not want. It entailed hours of extra work for a counsellor. In discussion it came out that their reason for suggesting the change was that they might more quickly get acquainted with all the counsellors. A perfectly sound reason, which I had not appreciated. Their request was satisfied by having the counsellors rotate in-



stead of the campers. It was a revelation to us all that all sides of the problems had to be brought into the open before things could be settled to everyone's satisfaction.

Then the little Ojibways came up in all seriousness with the request that they have locks put on their cabin doors. Why? Because there was a certain group of campers they did not like and they wanted them to stay outside. We dramatized that one there and then, and when they saw themselves forty years hence alone in the world because they still shut out all those people they did not like, they decided one and all to throw their cabin doors wide open.

There followed many interesting discussions. The Cree aims was another outgrowth of a winter's discussions, and the scroll was decided on in answer to one little camper's request. "I want something I can put at the foot of my bed and say every night—did I or didn't I?" The aims were sent out to each camper on a Christmas card the following Christmas.

These aims had a real meaning for us all and helped to form a basis on which the camp grew and prospered during the following years. They read:

WE AIM—

To live out the things we believe,  
To have a sincere care for all people,  
To be disciplined in all we do,  
To see the job that needs to be done and carry it through,  
To be constructive in our thinking and speaking,  
To learn to work in a group,  
To be willing to recognize and to correct our faults,  
To study and work for sound homes, united communities  
and a peaceful world.

THE CREES



---

## CHAPTER 10

---

### *Learning to Live in a Community*

"WORLD CITIZENSHIP" was the chosen topic for this special summer. We aimed to build in the camp the kind of community we would like to have in our home town or in our country. I had long looked on the role of camping as a unique opportunity to develop qualities of leadership. I hoped that the camper might receive not only training in camp activities, but the kind of training that would make her effective in working and living with people. Here was an opportunity to develop the type of citizen concerned for the good of the country, not her own personal gain—a person with vision, who could see what needed to be done, knew how to do it, and had the courage and initiative to go ahead.

This aim became our challenge. With it in mind we looked carefully into the detail of every phase of camp life, and found many things to improve. The first step had to be taken by the director herself.

With this new aim in mind, we decided the cabin group would represent the family unit. In the unity and strength of this group would be the strength of the tribe. The cabin counsellor would work out the problems and difficulties involved in living together. Since



formerly it was through working directly with the cabin group that I had gained my greatest satisfaction, it was not easy to give up that contact. But now I must step aside. The captain of a ship does not do everything himself, he has to have a crew he can trust and he has to trust them. I had always tried to select counsellors in whom I could place the utmost confidence, and I was beginning now to see that the first step in this new plan was to relinquish some of my control and delegate it to the counsellors. The plan did not make an easier life for the director at first; on the contrary it meant constant supervision, for it was much more complicated and difficult to work through others and achieve results than to do it one's self. However, it was the democratic procedure.

Next, there was the maintenance staff. As an important part of the community, they naturally must be included in this project. Round table discussions were held with them, and it was discovered that they had many excellent suggestions which would save steps and make for quicker service. These were attended to. More thought was put into their time off, where they went and how they got there. If they wished to go off the premises and could not paddle, transportation was provided. Through it all we gained a much greater feeling of working together.

We had to work out with the counsellors ways and means of demonstrating the aim in each of their departments. The cabin groups took on their responsibilities as they would in a family. Each individual learned her responsibility as a member of the cabin group and took the consequences when responsibilities were not met.

The programme co-ordinator for instance, with this fresh approach, built the programme with a view to giving the cabin group ample opportunity for doing things together, such as cookouts, overnight trips, plays, at the



same time keeping in mind the necessity for activities with a larger group.

The whole idea of community living and unselfish leadership was spearheaded on the dock. There, there was concentrated activity, some fifty campers working at every phase of swimming, from the beginner in the pool to the expert on the diving tower. The camper had to learn to wait her turn, to give and take, and appreciate the importance of the other person. In turn, though each of the seven or eight counsellors was intent on her special part, each had to be conscious of the fact that she was not a separate unit but one of a group of counsellors, she had to remember that her co-operation with that group was more important than what she was doing by herself, expert though she might be. In other words, the teamwork was of primary importance. In the quality of the teamwork lay the success of the day.

It was on the waterfront too, that we had emphasized our policy of being constructive in our criticisms of the campers' efforts, and here that the results became most evident. If a criticism were negative, spirits were dampened immediately. Everyone felt the reaction, slight though it might be, so whether the camper dived with feet apart and bent knees or whether she made a poor landing in the canoe, always the "better way" was stressed rather than the fault. There was opportunity in every department to put into practice some of the truths we were learning. The waterfront counsellors organized their work so that there was opportunity for the older campers to help the younger ones. The Rangers stressed the care of government property and the sharing of responsibility, of cooking, clean-up, packing and leaving the campsite ready for the next comer.

In dramatics and music, the aim was emphasized through the choice of plays and songs. Often in dramatics



the campers made up their own plays or skits which embodied incidents around camp and cabin relevant to the aim. I remember in particular one very interesting skit depicting the non-constructive *vs.* the constructive camper on a campcraft project. A bridge was to be built over some swampy ground. Its construction was considerably slowed down by the bickering of the campers, a scene enacted by them with great gusto. The skit ended with the decision that it was more fun to belong to the construction gang than the wrecking crew. The point was not lost.

The office staff used every opportunity to teach the art of spending wisely, especially money spent on "tuck." They helped the younger camper keep her expense accounts in a specially prepared account book. Training for wider life experiences became the basic aim in everything we did.

We talked all this over with the campers, and they had many ideas about ways in which they could play their part with visitors, staff, people in general, as well as property and chores. They were encouraged to express their ideas in assembly by means of talks and panel discussions. They were given the opportunity to help with problems around camp, and as the occasion arose they were taught more about how to vote and how to choose the right person for an office.

We were delighted when the older campers wanted a day when they could "take over" and learn through doing something of what was involved in the running of a camp. A camper administration day was held immediately, the Crees taking over the administration of the whole camp for an entire day. This involved not only the responsibility for the programme but also that of assembly, guests, and any emergencies regarding the staff. The campers nominated and elected those they felt could



most adequately take the place of programme co-ordinator, tribal heads, activity heads, and director. Their choice showed insight and appreciation and was often a better choice than we as counsellors would have made. It was not a day off for counsellors, rather it was their chance to give the camper an idea of the opportunities and responsibilities of counselling. The understudy worked with the counsellor the day before Camper Administration Day so that she had a fair understanding of the work involved. When the day arrived the counsellors stood by and gave the campers their support. The campers took over the leadership, not the teaching. The whole camp entered into the spirit of it, and invariably George brought in his trumped-up emergencies to be solved. At the end of the day they admitted it had been difficult, but pronounced it the most worthwhile day of the summer.

The following morning at counsellors' meeting, the group of campers who had taken leadership gave their evaluation, and we found that after Camper Administration Day the Crees, with their insight into what went on behind the scenes, were an infinitely more co-operative and responsive group. An eagerness to have a part in something real grew apace.

The forming of work teams was another innovation arising from our aim of community living. Each tribe already had its committees for cabin inspection and programme. The Crees now formed in addition over-all teams which had to do with the whole camp. There were seven teams: Fruit and Food, Dining-room, Lodge, Pound, Tripping, Repairs and Grounds, and Laundry. Fruit and Food, for instance, took care of the fruit sent in by parents, kept it in the root-house and saw that it was properly washed before it was given out to campers each day after dinner. The Repairs and Grounds team



attended to minor repairs and the general appearance of the grounds and organized a clean-up if and when necessary. The Laundry team saw that the laundry sent out by the campers was properly marked and listed. Each team had a part in making the camp run smoothly. These things might seem trivial, but through this team work each camper felt a satisfaction in knowing that she was an asset rather than a liability during these difficult times.

Then V.J. Day came. The news came over the radio at 7 p.m. All the gongs and bugles around the camp were sounded and everyone crowded around the radio to hear the news. Immediately afterwards the Stars and Stripes was raised under the Union Jack to include the American children in our celebration, and everyone burst out singing, first the Star-Spangled Banner, then God Save the King. We gathered in the lodge and had a short spontaneous service of thanksgiving — counsellors, campers and staff. All evening the campers were quiet. Nearly everyone had some person overseas for whose safety they had feared. You could see them all over the camp gathered in small groups, but just before bedtime the spell seemed to break and they gave vent to their feelings, weaving about the camp in snake fashion, singing as they went.

The following night we decided to celebrate. Campers, counsellors, director, men and women, pitched in and cleared the fallen timber from an uncleared area in camp. For one hour one hundred or more persons worked like beavers dragging old logs and branches to the lakeshore for the mammoth bonfire which was to climax the day of rejoicing. An old floating dock was used as a raft and the men piled the logs and branches on it as fast as we could get them there. One child was heard to say, "Now I know what they mean when they talk about working together with a common aim." The raft was towed out on the





The **Margaret Eaton School Digital Collection** is a not-for-profit resource created in 2014-2015 to assist scholars, researchers, educators, and students to discover the Margaret Eaton School archives housed in the Peter Turkstra Library at Redeemer University College. Copyright of the digital images is the property of Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Canada and the images may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email digital images for individual non-commercial use. To learn more about this project or to search the digital collection, go to <http://libguides.redeemer.ca/mes>.